



United States Department of Agriculture



ALASKA REGION • CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST

State of the Chugach II 2013-2014



Forest
Service

Chugach
National Forest

R10-MB-784

September 2014



Forest Plan Revision Major Focus in 2013: Public forums and engagements attract hundreds of interested stakeholders



Welcome to the Chugach National Forest, the most northerly in the National Forest System!

Located in Southcentral, Alaska just 50 miles south of Anchorage, the Chugach forms a great arc around Prince William Sound and the Gulf

of Alaska. It stretches more than 200 miles from the Kenai Peninsula to the remote and wild Copper River Delta.

The Chugach National Forest seeks to engage diverse communities of interest in order to identify common goals. These alliances ensure our public land continues to provide the setting and resources the people of the area have enjoyed for thousands of years.

These ideas are something we heard a lot about as we began the first phase of a three year planning process to revise the 2002 forest plan under our 2012 National Forest System Planning Rule.

Now nearing completion, phase one, also known as the “Assessment,” identified and evaluated existing information about ecological, economic and social

conditions and trends related to the Forest and Southcentral, Alaska. The resulting Assessment report, will provide a solid base of current information for phases two, developing the revised plan, and three, developing a monitoring strategy.

The Chugach has been working to develop and provide focused and meaningful opportunities for public participation in the Assessment process that recognized and built upon the public’s previous contributions to Forest collaborative processes. The Forest has developed a range of engagement opportunities from broad public forums to targeted youth activities in classrooms and outreach to new audiences. Planning meetings were also held with the State of Alaska, Alaska Native Tribes and Corporations and neighboring land managers.

A few highlights from public participation:

- Eleven public forums in February-April of 2013
- Eight public forums in September-November of 2013
- Nine interactive youth sessions
- Outreach sessions with new audiences

The final assessment report will outline both Forest Service findings and public feedback and is expected to be complete and posted to the Chugach website in September 2014.

When the Assessment is complete, the Forest will move into Phase 2: Developing the plan revision which includes the Forest framing the “Need for Change.” The 2012 Planning Rule requires me as the Forest Supervisor to review relevant information and public comments from the assessment and monitoring, to identify a preliminary need for change to the existing 2002 plan and to inform the development of new plan components and other plan content.

I look forward to you staying engaged with us as we continue this process. Watch for more information and next steps at: www.fs.usda.gov/chugach

Terri Marceron
Chugach National Forest Supervisor

THE CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST

EST 1907

Roughly the size of New Hampshire, its 5.4 million acres serve as the backyard for half of Alaska’s population. The forest has been continuously inhabited by Alaska Natives for more than 10,000 years; the first nations include the Chugach, Eyak, Ahtna and Dena’ina Athabascan.

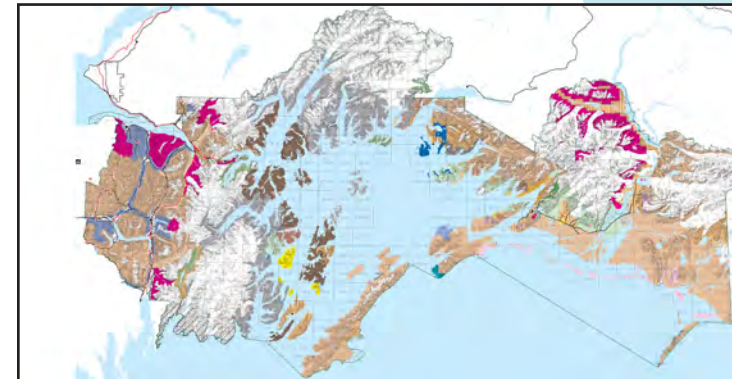


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C E L E B R A T I N G 5 0 Y E A R S O F W I L D E R N E S S

2014: 50 Years of American Wilderness

On September 3, 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act. This historic bill established

- The Voices of the Wilderness traveling art exhibit features a wide range of artwork, including photography, music, poetry, and paintings created by participants in artist-in-residence programs hosted by agencies that manage federally-designated wilderness. The show runs in Alaskan communities April-September.
- The annual Chugach and Tongass poster series highlights Forest Service wilderness in Alaska.
- A boat excursion explored the Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA.
- Chugach Children's Forest youth expeditions and teacher trainings took place in the WSA.
- In partnership with Alaska Geographic and the National Park Service, the Forest Service developed a wilderness radio series to debut September 2014.



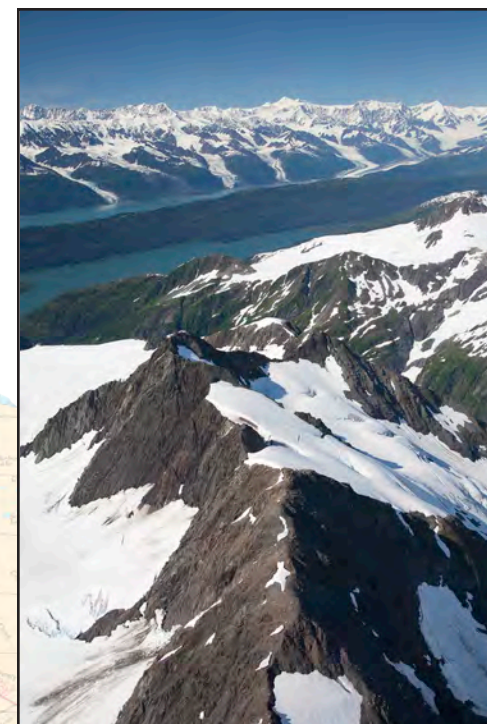
To learn more about the Wilderness Act and events, visit:

www.wilderness50th.org
www.myalaskaforests.org
www.fs.usda.gov/r10
www.fs.usda.gov/chugach

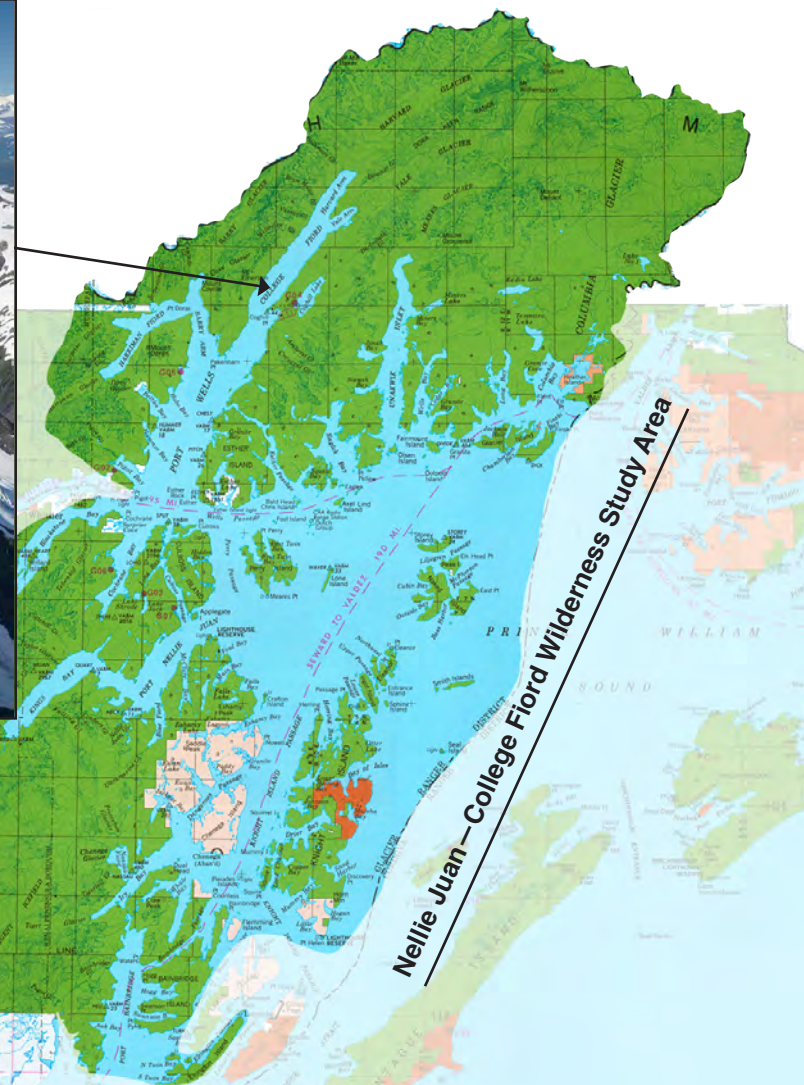
the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and set aside an initial 9.1 million acres of wildlands for the use and benefit of the American people. Over the past 50 years Congress has added over 100 million acres to this unique land preservation system.

The Chugach is home to the 2.1 million acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) designated by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. Located in western Prince William Sound, the WSA is managed to maintain its wilderness character consistent with the 1964 Wilderness Act and ANILCA.

To foster understanding and enjoyment of wilderness areas on the Chugach and Tongass National Forests, the Forest Service sponsored numerous events and products in 2014:



Aerial College Fiords and Coghill Lake, Prince William Sound, Chugach National Forest, Alaska.

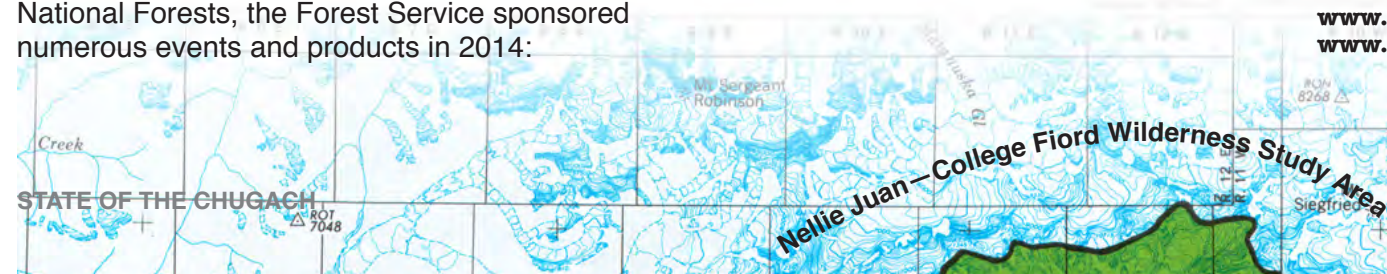


IN 2013, THE CHUGACH HOSTED ITS first First Friday Art Show with **Voices of the Wilderness Artist-in-Residence Susan Watkins**. More than 60 people showed up during the Anchorage Fur Rondy Celebration, to view 20 paintings inspired by Prince William Sound. The show's success and our desire to increase awareness of the Chugach National Forest has inspired us to plan more shows in 2014.

The first took place in May 2014 and featured student artwork highlighting bear awareness. Each year, **Wild and Aware Girdwood Bear committee (www.wildaware.org)** works with students, helping them create art, to draw awareness to bears, emphasizing healthy human-bear interactions.

In the fall, the Chugach we'll host another art show displaying artwork from **Artist-in-Residence** program and the **50th anniversary of the Wilderness Art Show** from a variety of artists.

www.voicesofthewilderness.blogspot.com.





E C O N O M I C E N G I N E

A Forest Famous for our Fish

IN ALASKA, COMMERCIAL, recreational and subsistence fisheries play central roles in the economy and culture of the entire state, which makes it all the more remarkable that some of the most renowned rivers and fisheries are concentrated in and around one place – the Chugach National Forest.

The Copper, Russian and Kenai Rivers that flow through the Forest provide for communities across Southcentral, Alaska and visitors from around the world. They’re joined by other popular and important systems that are prodigious producers of salmon, like the smaller coastal watersheds in Prince William Sound.

Together these rivers and surrounding habitat produce some 66.7 million salmon a year and host the largest recreation fisheries for Chinook, Sockeye and Coho salmon, and rainbow trout, in the State. A 2008 study estimates residents and non-residents fished a combined 2.5 million days per year, and that seventy-two percent of those days

were in Southcentral, Alaska, an area where approximately 50% of the fishing occurs within the watersheds of the Chugach National Forest.

The Chugach National Forest has long been identified by its famous fish and habitat. The first forest reserve in Alaska – the Afognak Forest and Fish Culture Reserve – was established in 1892 out of concern for salmon conservation. The reserve was eventually added to the Chugach National Forest (est. 1907) by executive order in 1908 by then President Theodore Roosevelt, bringing an important focus on salmon to the Forest’s mission.

Even with changing boundaries that removed Afognak from National Forest System lands, an emphasis on salmon continues to define the Forest. This is underscored in numerous ways, including in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which directs the Chugach National Forest to, “manage the Copper River Delta for the conservation of fish and wildlife, and their habitats.”

From locals filling their freezers for the year to commercial boat operators working hard to make a living and tourists lining the stream banks for an adventure of a lifetime, hundreds of thousands of people depend on the Forest’s abundant fisheries and salmon stocks.

Fish Facts

Chugach National Forest watersheds supply, on average, 66.7 million salmon a year – 11% of Pacific salmon production;

An estimate of the contribution Chugach National Forest habitat and salmon make to the state’s economy in support of commercial fisheries is \$232 million;

An estimated 3,141 commercial seafood-industry related jobs are supported by Chugach National Forest produced salmon;

Within Alaska, 72% of recreational angler days take place in the southcentral region. At least 50% of the fishing effort in this region is thought to occur within the watersheds of the Chugach National Forest.

E N G I N E

Total allocation:	18.2 million
Employee compensation:	12.2 million
Permanent employees:	\$11 million
Temp:	\$1.2 million
Fixed Wing & Helicopter:	\$376,501
Exclusive use helicopter/boat:	\$934,598
Purchases & Contracts:	\$3,175,669
Purchase cards:	\$1,093,781
AS Purchase/Delivery/BPA calls/Contracts:	\$2,081,888

Forest Expenditures

Total allocation:18.2 million
Employee compensation:12.2 million
Permanent employees:\$11 million
Temp:\$1.2 million
Fixed Wing & Helicopter:\$376,501
Exclusive use helicopter/boat:.....\$934,598
Purchases & Contracts:\$3,175,669
Purchase cards:\$1,093,781
AS Purchase/Delivery/BPA calls/Contracts:\$2,081,888

Employees

Permanent: 115 Seasonal: 69

RAC (Secure Rural Schools Funding)

No Title II funds were awarded in 2013.

Work & the Forest

Permits:

Outfitter/guide:.....147
Recreation Events:.....6
Noncommercial Group Use:.....1
Isolated Cabins:.....21
Campgrounds:.....2
Motion Picture:.....12

THE CHUGACH ON FILM

What is commercial filming?

“Use of motion picture, videotaping, sound-recording, or any other type of moving image or audio recording equipment on National Forest System (NFS) lands that involves the advertisement of a product or service, the creation of a product for sale, or the use of actors, models, sets, or props.”

That’s the boilerplate, but that’s not all. It’s also about “MAKING MOVIES!”

The world is realizing that all the great things that they hear (and that we have been telling everyone) about the Chugach are true and they are making the trek here in ever-increasing numbers, creating their own stories.

Hunting, fishing, hiking, mining, it’s all being put on film, (or more likely disc) and coming to a screen, big or small, near you sometime very soon.

Recent Film Crews on the Forest - a partial list

HiLine Productions Expeditions Overland	59th Parallel Productions Deer hunt for Alaska Outdoors Television
Radical Media Coors Light Commercial	High Noon Entertainment Filming Exit Glacier Guides (O/G Permit Holder) ice climbing
Alaska Channel promotional filming, hiking and rafting	Sun Never Sets Productions Top Gear
Square Vision Productions No film named – bear hunting	PSG Motion Pictures “GoldTimers”



C H U G A C H C H I L D R E N ' S F O R E S T

Chugach partners secure national grant to support career experience in the outdoors.

WHEN ALEX ZIMMERMAN WAS young, she loved the outdoors and told people she wanted to be a “bug scientist” when she grew up. But her career plans really began to take shape in 2012 when she was accepted into Youth Employment in Parks (YEP), a program of the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department and the Anchorage Park Foundation that provides a meaningful “first job” experience and career pathway for youth to work in the outdoors and natural resources fields.

“I started to know where I wanted to go,” she said. “I want to become a park ranger.” But it was hard to find a job after YEP. “Eventually I got a job as a house cleaner and I thought, what am I going to do with the rest of my life?”

Thanks to a partnership between the Chugach National Forest, Student Conservation

Association (SCA), the Municipality of Anchorage, the Anchorage Park Foundation, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Alaska Railroad, Alex was able to take her next step in the summer of 2013.

Alex and four other alumni from YEP, along with alumni from other Chugach Children’s Forest programs, were selected for a new summer conservation crew experience sponsored by the partners and led by seasoned SCA staff. The crew, made up of participants ages 17-20, took part in a ten week work experience on municipal and federal public lands to improve the quality and availability of outdoor recreation experiences.

When she got the phone call letting her know she had been selected, Alex said, “I felt like something was lifted off my shoulders.”

Participant’s achievements included:

- Clearing hazard trees from popular recreation trails at BLM’s Campbell Track in Anchorage;
- Repairing/rethreading walking and hiking trails in Anchorage City Parks;
- And, as part of their most remote experience, they worked alongside a Forest Service trail crew for one month at the Spencer Whistle Stop on the CNF where they:
 - Constructed the first mile and a half of a new trail to connect the Spencer Whistle Stop/new Placer River Bridge with the new Grandview Whistle Stop;
 - Constructed a short access trail to the Placer River;
 - Completed 4 miles of trail brushing and maintenance to the Spencer Bench Cabin site;
 - Cleaned up along the river and trails in the developed recreation areas;
 - Assisted with invasive plant removal.

As David Ilse, Public Services Staff Officer on the Glacier Ranger District, conveyed to



Alex and other youth gather with USFS staff in front of Placer River Bridge

a local reporter from the Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN) visiting the project, it was tough work. “It was raw ground when they first got here, covered in alder, vegetation... dense, dense ground to get through...they had

actually build a trail, it’s like oh my gosh, people will have no idea how much hard work it takes to build this trail, so I’ll never look at trails the same way ever again.” (APRN)

It was made possible in part by a nearly \$40,000 More Kids in the Woods (MKIW)/Children’s Forest cost-share grant from the US Forest Service. Local partners recruited by the team added an additional \$65,000 match to the grant.

Amanda Smith, head of partnership development for the Alaska Region of SCA said, “Youth are motivated and starved to find work opportunities. A strong group of partners worked together to build a career pathway for youth who are already interested and experienced in natural resource management, but have limited options for their next resource management job. It’s nice to see these efforts recognized with Forest Service funding.”

A new recreational experience for participants also drew partners’ in. “We want to give YEP

returning teens experience in public lands outside of Anchorage” said Beth „ Executive Director of the Anchorage Park Foundation. They have worked in urban parks for a summer, and now they’re working on spike crews, in some cases in the backcountry. So it’s a very different experience.”

Getting outside of Anchorage is something that appeals to the participants, as well. Crew member Shawna Strain grew up in Southeast Alaska where, “we were out in the woods, building forts all the time. When I moved to Anchorage I wasn’t doing that anymore. The city seemed so big compared to where I came from.”

Inspiring youth to enjoy the city’s neighboring public lands has been a focus for the Chugach National Forest for many years, and in 2008 Forest leaders bolstered this commitment by launching the Chugach Children’s Forest with non-profit partner Alaska Geographic. Since then, over 20,000 youth, volunteers and educators have been engaged in outdoor education programming, career opportunities, stewardship expeditions and volunteer outings.



The entire crew poses in front of the Spencer Whistle Stop

to do all the chainsaw work, brush clearing, the treadwork... doing the earth moving, and scratching line — putting in a brand new trail.” (APRN)

Crew member Shawna Strain concurred, “I could’ve never imagined that we were going to make a trail out of straight forest. I walk on a trail almost every day and I didn’t know what it takes. It’s like, oh, a trail — it probably just appeared out of nowhere. But when you



C H U G A C H C H I L D R E N ' S F O R E S T


Children's Forest Expeditions: Habitat Restoration Kayaking Expeditions 2013-2014

CHUGACH

CHILDREN'S Forest expeditions bring under-represented youth from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds to the stunning Prince William Sound for habitat restoration projects. These kayak-based expeditions also focus on recreational opportunities available on the Chugach National Forest. Participants included teens from around the Chugach including Cordova, Chenega Bay, Kenai, Valdez, Tatitlek, Whittier, Girdwood, and Anchorage. Restoration projects included weed removal, marine debris clean up, and trail and campsite improvements.

Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area, Prince William Sound


Students surveyed seven campsites in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area. The inventories included updating GPS coordinates, dismantling fire-rings, and taking photo points of durable campsites for user areas in Culross Passage. These photos aid Chugach National Forest rangers



in identifying the measure of campsite impact in user areas. In addition to campsite surveys, students removed marine debris at sites in Culross Passage, Applegate Spit, and Foul Bay. Marine debris included garbage such as plastic bottles and soda cans, gillnetting, and glass bottles from the 2011 Japanese tsunami.

Harriman Fjord, Prince William Sound


Kayaking expeditions focus on removing invasive species and trash at user sites in Harriman Fjord, Prince William Sound (PWS). The students cleaned up glass, nails, and other metal objects at abandoned cabin sites near Hobo Bay and Serpentine Cove, and removed invasive species around user areas from Oystercatcher and Viewpoint beach. Rangers Barbara Lydon and Garrison Vizina met up with the students to provide wilderness stewardship education through discussions and hands-on learning projects. The rangers joined the group in Harrison Lagoon where they monitored campsites, discussed air quality monitoring (followed up by a scavenger



hunt for various lichens), and had engaging conversations with the Forest Service rangers about wilderness management, the difference between land management agencies and career opportunities within the Forest Service.

Blackstone and Pigot Bay


This expedition concentrated on removing invasive species in Pigot Bay. On this expedition, Forest Service ecologist, Pete Johnson, lead the crew in eradicating invasive Icelandic Poppies along the spawning channel. The crew spent three days pulling 3-4 acres of infested stream banks and successfully pulled 99% of the non-native plants. Pete Johnson explained that they, “successfully eliminated the immediate threat of a spread of Icelandic poppy so the area could be downgraded to a monitoring



area.” Additional service projects included naturalizing campsites in Blackstone Bay, taking repeat photos in select locations to database climate change and forest succession, and the improvement of a muddy picnic site in Squirrel Cove.

Marine Stewardship Expedition

This boat-based expedition on the research vessel Babkin brought middle school students from Chenega Bay, Cordova, Valdez, and the Anchorage area to Prince William Sound to monitor oil spill recovery efforts and remove marine debris from area beaches. Participants created multimedia projects such as videos, marine debris art, and poetry to share their lessons learned. Two new partners joined the crew: the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies and the Gulf of Alaska Keepers. Funding from this program comes from EVOS (through the Gulf of Alaska Keepers), PWSRCAC, Chugach National Forest, and REI.



These ten-day trips were completed in partnership with:

Alaska Geographic • Chugach School District • REI • Alaska Pacific University • Gulf of Alaska Keepers • Copper River Watershed Projects • Center for Alaska Coastal Studies • Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustees Council • Alaska Teen Media Institute • Anchorage School District.

Major funding came from Prince William Sound RAC with significant donations from REI, Chugach School District, and gear discounts from a variety of businesses.



L O C A L & G L O B A L

Eagle Glacier: A World-Class training ground for US Olympic athletes

AMERICA'S ELITE, Olympic-bound Nordic skiers have a high-altitude secret they hope will give them an edge.

Team members take a 10-minute helicopter ride from sea level up to Eagle Glacier on Alaska's Chugach National Forest, the most northern national forest in the U.S. The environment there mimics snow conditions in competition.

The glacier, 5,500 feet above Girdwood, Alaska, is home to the Thomas Training Center, operated under permit by the Alaska Pacific University Nordic Ski Center. The ski center was established in the late '90s as a model for creating international success in American Nordic skiing.

Right now we have three ladies who have skied in the top 10," said Erik Flora, center director and head coach. "We have Kikkan Randall, who is the overall sprint World Cup leader last year, and World Champion Holly Brooks, who is fifth in the World Cup, and Sadie Bjornsen, who is also in the top 10 in

the World Cup. Right now we are one of the only clubs with three ladies in the top 10 in the World Cup. And a lot of that is due to skiing up here."

The glacier presents variable conditions like those that skiers are likely to encounter when they race overseas in the world championships or the Olympics. Whether it's soft, slushy snow or hard snow, it all helps to build technique and fitness. The regular presence of fog and clouds require skiers to sharpen all of their senses.

Flora and his team have used those conditions to their advantage, re-creating the trails and experience that racers can encounter.

Noah Hoffman, a member of the men's team who competed in Sochi, described the trails in Russia as some of the most difficult he has ever skied in the world, with the longest climb of any race course he has ever seen. Flora created a similar layout on the glacier.

"To be able to practice a climb of that length and that sustained effort is really important,"

said Hoffman. "Sochi also has some rolling terrain with moderate steepness of hills, and on another section of the course out here [on Eagle Glacier], Erik was able to mimic that and get us a good feel for the upper part of the Sochi trail."

From the moment they exit the helicopter, walk off the rocks and onto the glacier, skiers recognize what a special place it is. Globally, there are four or five major summer skiing snowfields or glaciers that cross country skiers practice on in the summer. Eagle is unique in that they can stay in a warm dormitory right at the glacier's edge.

"There's no other place in the world that's like Eagle Glacier," said Olympian Holly Brooks. "This is the only place you can sleep right next to a glacier and train twice a day. You wake up in the morning and walk out on snow."

Ibeck Creek Off-Highway Vehicle Trail Re-Route & Watershed Restoration Project

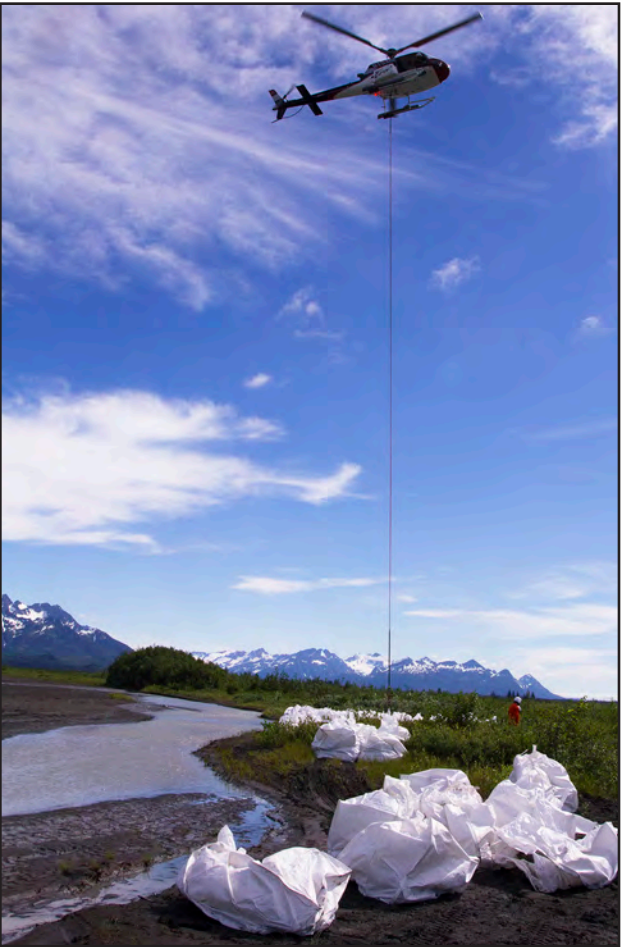
Eight miles from Cordova lies the popular **Ibeck Creek/Scott River Watershed** home for black and brown bear, moose, and mountain goat. The Creek also supports one of the largest runs of coho salmon on the Copper River Delta, its braided forks offering ideal habitat.

We're in the process of completing trail work to reduce the number of stream crossings and re-route motorized use out of stream channels. We are also working with **Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Habitat Division** to issue a general permit to legally designate stream fords for a specific trail network.

In 2013, re-routing and rehabilitation continued with the help of local construction firms. 925 meters were finished by hand, stumps removed and soft areas hardened with river rock. Over 100,000 lbs of river rock were put in. Fifty boulders were moved by helicopter to close unnecessary spur trails and to protect restoration areas. These re-routes connect with sections of trail completed in 2012 and eliminate the need for more than 20 stream crossings.

Information sign boards were placed at both trailheads, to educate riders about the Forest's watershed restoration efforts. Work on the stream restoration continues in 2014.

The objective of the project is to minimize damage to critical salmon habitat while providing motorized access routes.



A US Coast Guard helicopter prepares to lift a load of rocks to be used to reinforce multi-use trails on Ibeck Creek.



L O C A L & G L O B A L

Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI) and Key Coastal Wetlands in the USFS Alaska Region

THE USFS ALASKA REGION HAS A unique position in the Forest Service as the land manager of three major wetlands along the Pacific Coast: the Stikine River Delta and Yakutat Forelands on the Tongass National Forest, and the Copper River Delta on the Chugach National Forest. These Key Coastal Wetlands host a variety of water bird and fish species, such as western sandpipers, Aleutian terns, dusky Canada geese, cutthroat trout, and salmon.

In response to these special management concerns, the Cordova Ranger District on the Chugach National Forest currently holds positions on the managing board of the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI), the Pacific Coast Joint Venture, and the Alaska Shorebird Working Group. Additional attendance at the Boreal Partners in Flight meetings assist in current and future statewide collaboration. These partnerships have generated hundreds of thousands of partner dollars for USFS Alaska Region programs.

In 2013, six CRIMBI/key coastal wetland-focused meetings resulted in a variety of partner-funded projects including: wetland pond succession, children’s wetland education, new dusky Canada goose nest islands, and shorebird education, to name a few. Additional meetings were attended for Boreal Partners in Flight and Alaska Shorebird Group. Forest Service personnel also assisted CRIMBI working group management and helped international partners (such as Calidris, based out of Colombia) in program development.

2013 was also the culminating year for WetlandsLIVE, a wetlands education webcast funded in part by CRIMBI. The objective of this project was to educate students in grades 4-8 about the importance of wetlands to migratory birds and fish and to explain threats to wetland habitats.

Five webcasts were broadcast, three in English and two in Spanish, from Boundary Bay, Canada, Panama City, Panama, and Cordova, Alaska. In recognition of its power as an education tool for wetlands conservation on an international level, WetlandsLIVE was awarded the North American Waterfowl Management Plan’s prestigious National Blue Wing Teal Award, in March 2014.



Alaganik Slough, Copper River Delta.

G L O B A L

WetlandsLIVE
A DISTANCE LEARNING ADVENTURE
C O N N E C T • L E A R N • A C T

Wetlands are an important link between water and land and more than half of America’s original wetlands have been destroyed. Educating students about the important ecological role of wetlands is the first step towards protecting these vital fish and wildlife habitats. WetlandsLIVE provided a year-long emphasis on wetlands around the globe through three free educational webcasts. This was a multi-year project and 2013 was the culminating year, with a focus on outreach and broadcasts.

The Programs

On location in Boundary Bay, Canada, Panama City, Panama, and Cordova, Alaska, each program had a different focus:

- Boundary Bay’s “Wading into Wetlands” was aired live in October 2012 and addressed what wetlands are and why they are important.

- Panama City’s “Wetlands Connections” aired on March 2013. This program built upon students’ prior knowledge of wetlands and explored topics on the importance of maintaining a healthy string of wetlands for migratory species.
- Cordova’s “Discovering Wetlands” was broadcast in May 2013 with a focus was on wetlands exploration through student projects. It included topics ranging from wetlands restoration to the invertebrates that make up shorebird food webs.

Two Spanish language programs of WetlandsLIVE (*Humedales en Vivo*) were filmed and webcast. *Caminando en los Humedales* (Wading into Wetlands), filmed in Panama City, covered topics similar to those addressed in the Boundary Bay webcast. *Descubriendo Humedales* (Discovering Wetlands) filmed in Cordova, featured children exploring wetland habitats and participating in a wetlands restoration project. Both *Humedales en Vivo* programs were aired in May 2013 via the WetlandsLIVE website.

WetlandsLIVE was designed to include live elements through webcast or webchat for an interactive experience. Students watching

the program could participate by submitting questions that would be answered by wetlands experts. Over 150 questions from about 30 schools were submitted during the webchats, and over 25,000 visits were logged to the webchat page. The WetlandsLIVE programs were not only available via the project website (wetlandslive.pwnet.org), but also aired on television in their respective countries. It is estimated that over 165,000 students watched these programs through the website alone.

In May 2013, in acknowledgement of excellent programming, **WetlandsLIVE** received the Silver Communicator Award from the International Academy of the Visual Arts. Then, in March 2014, **WetlandsLIVE** was awarded again with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan’s prestigious National Blue Wing Teal Award, recognizing it as a powerful educational tool for wetlands conservation at an international level.

Partners

CRIMBI, US Forest Service, Prince William County School District, Bird Studies Canada, Pacific WildLife Foundation, the Pacific Coast Joint Venture, Alaska Geographic, MarViva and Panama Audubon




L O C A L & G L O B A L

Secrets of the Fungi Forest

TO VISIT A MUSHROOM HARVESTING spot outside of Girdwood last week, I had to promise Chugach National Forest mushroom expert Kate Mohatt I would take the coordinates of our location with me to my grave.

“Your slips sink my ship,” she told me as I followed her down the mossy trail with her basket and mushroom knife.


Girdwood sits in a rainy sweet spot where the boreal forest of Southcentral meets the rainforests of coastal Alaska. That makes it excellent for fungi – that’s pronounced Fun-JEYE.



More territorial than berry-pickers or fishermen, Alaska’s mushroom people are zealots. When Mohatt first came to Girdwood and started organizing the Fungus Fair, an event that draws about 800 people during a weekend to listen to mushroom lectures and take forays into the woods, there was some grumbling from the locals. Her posters were torn down around town.

Then, she was hunting some giant boletes, big yellow spongy mushrooms that turn blue where they are handled, when she discovered someone has sent her messages scratched in the fungi flesh. “Down with Mohatt,” they said. “No more fungus fairs.” Mohatt is very cautious now about protecting locals’ spots. Her mushroom nemesis eventually confessed and apologized, she said.

We threaded through the trees until we saw what she was looking for. Fungi shaped like




huge chicken’s combs hung from the bark of a dying tree. It was the color of orange Tic Tacs.

She sliced off a nub and handed it to me. It was firm and damp and smelled like earth. The mushroom was called “chicken of the woods,” she said. It wasn’t too flavorful but it would go great in a stir-fry.

Mushroom people break down into three camps, she told me. There are the academics, many of whom don’t eat mushrooms at all. Then there is the “Can I eat it?” crowd, serious mushroom hunters who want meaty boletes, ethereal-looking white angel’s wings, and the Holy Grail of Alaska mushroom hunting, the rare, beautiful blue chanterelle. And then there is the “Can I trip on it?” crowd, looking for hallucinogenics. Those people are the ones most likely to get themselves into trouble.

Fungi are essential to forest survival, Mohatt told me. Many fungi have a companion tree



species that depends on them. Fungi might gather moisture at the roots or break down decomposing wood. Mushrooms are the fruit of fungi, like apples off a tree, she said. Most often the fungi is underground.

Identifying mushrooms is tricky even for an expert, Mohatt said. There are an estimated 40,000 species and more get discovered all the time.

Mohatt picked a small reddish mushroom off the ground and sliced off a piece of the cap.

“Want to try it?”

I could tell by the look in her eye that it wasn’t going to be delicious.

Mushrooms of the same species can vary in color, which is one reason that it’s hard to just identify them from a picture. Instead, you have to ID them by smell, taste and the pattern their spores make when you leave a mushroom cap on a piece of paper. I took the mushroom she handed me. Chew it up, she said, then spit it out.

The taste in my mouth started out woody and then went habanero-hot. I spit it out. My tongue burned. The mushroom was called a “red hot milky cap,” she said. If ingested, it causes gastrointestinal distress.

“But, you’ll be fine.”

Mohatt tastes non-edible mushrooms all the time for identification purposes and has never been sick.

Lots of times when people eat wild mushrooms and get ill, she said, they are not being poisoned, they just allergic or having difficulty digesting it. Morel mushrooms, which grow in burn areas the spring, are edible

but cause reactions in a surprising number of people, she said.


Only a handful of people die each year from mushroom poisoning in the U.S.

The most poisonous mushroom in Alaska is the galerina, a small, brown mushroom with gills under the cap. Some people pick it and eat it think it will cause hallucinations.

“It causes liver failure,” she said. “And a long, torturous death.”

Cooking mushrooms makes many species less toxic (but not the galerina), she said. Even commercial mushrooms have some carcinogenic qualities, but they disappear with cooking.

We didn’t see anyone for almost two hours along our trail. Then we ran into a grandmother and her granddaughters with their baskets. We were pleasant to each other as we passed but I noticed they stood still until we were out of sight, careful not to reveal which way they were headed.



Excerpted from a story written by Julia O’Malley and originally published in the Anchorage Daily News.



P A R T N E R S H I P S

Stream Watch Updates

Stream Watch has been very busy the past few seasons, with nearly 60 Stream Watch Ambassadors, dozens of Stewardship Work Days, participation in outreach events, and local presentations. Lisa Beranek managed the lower river program and covered Bings Landing, Moose Range Meadows, Centennial Park, and the Kasilof River. Remy McBride managed the upper river program and covered Russian River Falls, Russian River Campground, and the Russian River/Kenai River Confluence.

Stream Watch Volunteer Statistics				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Volunteer Hours	816	1022	1607	1497
Public Contacts	2358	3620	4041	4150
Trash Collected (Lbs)	378	610	851	2953*
*Includes the weight of fishing line, fish passage barrier and litter.				
Numbers for 2014 not available until October.				



Stream Watch expands youth engagement

Alumni from Chugach Children’s Forest programs joined with seasoned Stream Watch volunteers to help protect one of Alaska’s most important watersheds, the Russian-Kenai River. The group, working with Forest Service staff, rafted down river 6 miles starting from the Russian River ferry crossing, collecting trash fom the banks along the way.

The event was sponsored by Alaska Fly Fishers, the United States Forest Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Stream Watch, Kenai Watershed Forum, Alaska Wildland Adventures, and ConocoPhillips.

The Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center (**CNFAIC**) is one of fifteen national avalanche centers affiliated with the US Forest Service. Its mission is to provide avalanche and mountain weather information and offer basic avalanche education.

The Friends of the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center (**F-CNFAIC**) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, organized to support and contribute to CNFAIC’s educational and scientific activities. Formed in 2003, F-CNFAIC helps bridge the gap between Forest Service funding and real operating expenses. It plays a large role in supporting forecaster salaries and operating and maintaining weather instruments and webcams.

CNFAIC Basics 2013/2014

- 5 PFT/part-time staff
- Advisories from November 17-April 28, 2013 - 179 total advisories (153 in Turnagain; 26 in Summit)/Advisories from November 21-April 27, 2014 - 172 total advisories (150 in Turnagain; 22 in Summit)
- 276,000 total website visits/15% increase in 2014
- 200 subscribers to email service/366 email subscribers-2014
- 1500+ Facebook followers/1800+ followers-2014
- Contributed to or directly provided more than 30 educational opportunities for the public each year
- Friends of the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center contributions: \$76,671.36 (2014 numbers not yet available)

Portage Valley Recreation Plan

Sustainable Recreation
Work continues on the development of a shared vision for Portage Valley. The Forest Service and several interested stakeholders have been working on developing several strategies and action items to help achieve this vision.

Interpretive Planning & Design
The new interpretive plan for Portage Valley is currently undergoing review by the Forest. This plan will include site specific interpretive treatments, as well as, way finding recommendations and designs for several new orientation and interpretive panels in the valley.



Snowmachine tracks crisscross Turnagain Pass. photo credit: Mike Davis



D I V E R S E N E T W O R K S

ON FRIDAY, JULY 12TH, 2013, Forest Supervisor Terri Marceron participated in a ceremony at Chugach Alaska Corporation (CAC) to formally transfer a National Historic Landmark plaque to the corporation. The plaque had been provided to the Forest in 1963 by the Secretary of the Interior in recognition of the national significance of Palugvik, a prehistoric Chugach Eskimo long-term occupation site in Prince William Sound.

The site had been conveyed in May per ANCSA 14(h)(1). The Native American Technical Corrections Act of 2004 directs USDA to convey to Chugach Alaska Corporation any objects, artifacts and records associated with lands conveyed under ANCSA 14(h)(1). Present at the ceremony were: Sheri Buretta, CAC Chairman of the Board; John Johnson, CAC Vice President

Cultural Resources; Jeremy Karchut, National Park Service Alaska Region Archaeologist; Deidre St Louis, CNF Public Services Staff Officer; and Ed DeCleva, CNF Heritage Program Manager and Tribal Relations Specialist. CAC provided photographic service to document the historic occasion. The parties spoke sincerely of respect and appreciation of one another regarding the positive trend in the government to government relationship in recent years.



CNF Supervisor Terry Marceron, CAC VP of Cultural Resources John Johnson and CAC Chairman Sheri Buretta

Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP)

ANSEP is a sustainable longitudinal educational pathway that leads Alaska Native and rural students to university graduation. The program promotes student enrollment in biological sciences and engineering, placement in the professional development stream, and graduation with related University of Alaska degrees. ANSEP is working to increase the graduation rate of minority high school students into college-level science and engineering programs. ANSEP students do so at a rate greater than 50%

The Summer Bridge Program is aimed at recent high school graduates who will be attending the university in the fall. The Summer Bridge component solidifies the students' vision of a career in the sciences. The nine week program includes living on UAA's campus during the first five weeks and completing a field science internship during the last four weeks. All students must successfully complete federal safety training including bear safety, firearms, first aid and CPR, ethics and conduct, aviation, watercraft and cold water submersion with underwater egress.



**Flor Calderon
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)**

Flor Calderon, a student from Los Angeles, California studying Wildlife Conservation Biology worked with the Girdwood Ranger District this summer as the HACU intern. During her 10-week internship, Flor learned the protocols for conducting bird, goshawk, and bat surveys and taught others about bear awareness and safety. She learned how to identify and remove invasive plants, and how to create habitat for fish in stocked lakes and perform salmon surveys. During her week shadowing interpreters, she boarded four different vessels that provide guided glacier tours and was able to view wildlife and the beautiful landscape of Prince William Sound. Flor also helped a trail crew construct new trail, conducted tree surveys, translated a brochure into Spanish, surveyed visitors, and shadowed a safety inspector – all of which gave her a greater understanding of the large spectrum of duties performed by the Forest Service. Flor was so inspired by her experiences that she is

interested in future employment with the Forest Service. In fact she said, “Being chosen by the USDA Forest Service to live and learn in Alaska is the greatest experience of my life. I feel like I won the jack pot of all internships!”

**Lesly Caballero-Garcia
Environment for the Americas Intern**

Lesly came to the Cordova Ranger District from March through the end of July to work with the wildlife program, promote shorebird education, and lead shorebird surveys during peak migration. Lesly participated in owl surveys, worked on planning and program development for WetlandsLIVE, and provided local outreach and education, to the Spanish speaking community in particular. She volunteered with the fish crew for Kids Fishing Day and Kids Hike and Fish. During the summer months, Lesly participated as a wildlife crew member and worked on projects including dusky Canada goose artificial nest island monitoring and maintenance, Ibeck Creek trail re-route and invasive weed removal. Lesly returned home to Petaluma, California to continue working toward her degree in Environmental Science.

Summer Bridge Intern Melanie Roland

Melanie Roland is interested in civil engineering. She was given a chance to explore that interest this summer along with geology at Spencer glacier in Portage Valley. “I am from Bethel, Alaska and I wanted to do the Summer Bridge program to expand my knowledge and experience with the USFS and learn what I could to do in the future. Melanie hopes to continue with the USFS next summer.



ANSEP Summer Bridge Intern Melanie Roland and her co-workers




F O R E S T H I G H L I G H T S

Begich, Boggs Visitor Center

From May ‘til September...

Opened to the public in 1986, and rededicated with new exhibits in 2001, the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center is built upon the terminal moraine left behind by Portage Glacier in 1914. The Visitor Center offers an unique opportunity to learn about the Chugach National Forest. Award-winning exhibits, educational presentations, the recently completed film “Retreat and Renewal: Stories from Alaska’s Chugach National Forest,” interpretive services, and an Alaska Geographic bookstore are available to serve the public.



The new film allows you to get more familiar with the Chugach National Forest through dramatic human and natural stories that illustrate this landscape’s continuity and resilience.

In the fall of 2013 the Chugach National Forest and the USDA Creative Media & Broadcast Center finished production on the new movie “Retreat and Renewal: Stories from the Chugach National Forest.”

In April, 2014 the movie premiered at the Bear Tooth Theater in Anchorage to great acclaim. Local community showings have taken place

this summer and it is available for viewing at the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Catch a sneak peak of the movie trailer at myalaskaforests.com

BBVC Details


Entry Fees
\$5.00 for adults. Includes admission to film and exhibits. Children 15 and younger are free!

We honor Interagency Passes

- Senior Pass, Access Pass
- Annual Pass
- Military Pass
- Golden Age/Access Passport)

Contact us:

- (907) 783-2326 May-Sept
- (907) 783-3242 Oct-April



BBVC from the air.

Prince William Sound


Kayaking is a wonderful way to be on the water and check out some of the 200 seabird colonies. Prince William Sound’s more than 3,500 miles of intricate coastline, tidewater glaciers and bountiful marine life, are an open invitation to kayakers to explore this remote area.

Plan a multiple day trip to access remote campsites or one of 14 cabins in the Sound. All campsites are primitive.

HIGHLIGHTS

Reserve public use cabins up to 180 days in advance. Popular sites book up quickly.

Prince William Sound boasts more bald eagles than the entire Lower 48 combined.



Eastern Kenai Peninsula

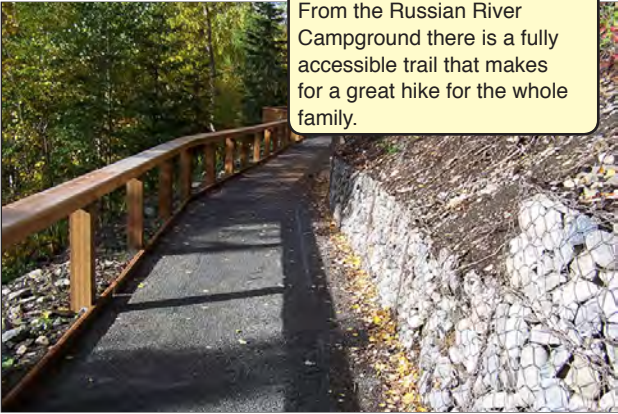
Russian River draws visitors between June and September for world-class red and silver salmon and rainbow trout fishing.

110 road miles south of Anchorage, visitors enjoy diverse recreational activities while visiting the Russian River Campground, Ferry Access Site, Russian River Falls, Russian Lakes Trail and cabin system, and the Kenaitze K’Beq’ interpretive site.

The Russian River is in the heart of bear country and visitors need to be “bear-aware” at all times in both the developed and undeveloped areas of this site.

HIGHLIGHTS

From the Russian River Campground there is a fully accessible trail that makes for a great hike for the whole family.




Copper River Delta

Each year, around May 1, Cordova welcomes 12-14 million shorebirds to the Copper River Delta, the largest contiguous wetlands complex on the Pacific Coast.

The Delta is a mecca for anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers, but it is best known for birds —from stately trumpeter swans presiding over their cygnets to thousands of sandpipers dipping for food along the beaches and mudflats.

HIGHLIGHTS

Enjoy a hike on the 3-mile McKinley Lake Trail or a trip to Alaganik Slough.



STATE OF THE CHUGACH

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